IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-8 (Canceled).

Claim 9 (Currently amended): A surgical needle combination for implanting a sling, the combination comprising:

an elongate arcuate needle that is sized and shaped to withstand forces encountered during a sling implantation procedure; the needle having first and second ends;

means for associating the needle with a sling[[,]];

a first handle associated with an end of the needle; and

a second handle, separate from the first handle and situated along the needle.

Claim 10 (Currently amended): A surgical needle combination according to claim 9 wherein the second handle includes handle repositioning means for affording axial repositioning of the second handle along the length of the needle.

Claim 11 (Currently amended): A surgical needle combination according to claim 10 wherein the handle repositioning means of the second handle includes means for moving the second handle axially toward the first handle and for resisting movement of the second handle axially away from the first handle.

Claim 12 (Currently amended): A surgical needle combination according to claim 10 wherein the first handle includes means for moving and repositioning the first handle relative to the needle.

Claim 13 (Currently amended): A surgical needle combination according to claim 10 wherein the first handle includes gripping means for enhancing manual grasping of the handle.

Claim 14 (Currently amended): A surgical needle combination according to claim 10 wherein a portion of the needle extends within the first handle along substantially the entire length of the first handle to enhance attachment of the first handle to the needle.

Claim 15 (Currently amended): A method of implanting a sling comprising the steps of:

providing an elongate arcuate needle that is sized and shaped to withstand forces encountered during a sling implantation procedure[[;]], the needle having first and second ends; ~~and~~ means for associating the needle with a sling[[,]]; a first handle attached to an end of the needle; and a second handle, separate from the first handle and situated along the needle[[,]];

inserting the end of the needle that is opposite the first handle into tissue of the patient;

passing the needle through tissue of the patient by grasping the first or the second handle, the needle or any combination thereof, to control the passage of the needle into tissue.

Claim 16 (Original): A method of implanting a sling according to claim 15 further including moving the second handle toward the first handle while passing the needle through tissue.

Claim 17 (Currently amended): A method of implanting a sling comprising the steps of:

providing an elongate arcuate needle that is sized and shaped to withstand forces encountered during a sling implantation procedure[[;]], the needle having first and second ends; ~~and~~ means for associating the needle with a sling[[,]]; a first handle attached to an end of the needle; and a second handle, separate from the first handle and situated along the needle, the second handle including releasable means for securing the second handle to the needle[[,]];

placing the second handle in a first position spaced from the first handle to afford a controlled insertion of needle into tissue and to resist lurching movements of the needle within the tissue by affording engagement with abdominal tissue of the patient[[,]];

inserting the end of the needle that is opposite the first handle into tissue of the patient[[;]];

passing the needle through tissue of the patient an initial amount[[,]];

then moving the second handle to a second position that is located closer to the first handle than the first position[[,]]; and

then further passing the needle through tissue of the patient.